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Peacebuilding Commission

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Report of the mission of the Peacebuilding Commission to Burundi

9 to 15 April 2007

I. Background

1. At its fifth meeting, on 21 February 2007, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission decided that the Commission would undertake field visits to Sierra Leone and Burundi. The mission to Burundi was conducted from 9 to 15 April 2007. The 18-member Commission delegation was led by the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the country-specific configuration on Burundi, and included the Permanent Representatives of Egypt, Jamaica and Uganda to the United Nations, an official of the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the United Nations and an official of the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations. Representatives of Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the European Commission associated themselves with the mission through their embassies in Burundi. Representatives of Angola and India joined the delegation from their embassies in the United Republic of Tanzania. The primary purposes of the mission were to obtain first-hand information about the situation in Burundi and assess the challenges to peacebuilding; discuss with the Government and other stakeholders gaps within priority areas for peacebuilding and the development of an integrated framework/strategy for peacebuilding; and communicate the main principles and purposes of the Peacebuilding Commission to stakeholders on the ground. The full terms of reference, composition and programme of the mission are set out in annexes I and II to the present report.

2. The primary message of the mission was to convey the assurance that the engagement of the Commission is aimed at maintaining sustained international attention and support for Burundi's sustainable peacebuilding efforts, with full respect for national ownership. The support of the Commission could include bringing together all relevant actors, marshalling resources and advising on integrated strategies for peacebuilding. An important outcome of the mission was a reaffirmation of an understanding and commitment from the Government on the next steps forward for the engagement of the Commission with Burundi. The visit also reinforced in the eyes of the Burundi public the conviction that the Commission

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can play an important role in Burundi, in particular in fostering greater dialogue and coordination among all stakeholders working on peace consolidation. The Commission will have to meet the challenge of living up to the high expectations raised by the visit.

3. The mission met with the President and first Vice-President of Burundi, the President of the Senate, the President of the National Assembly, cabinet ministers, representatives of the judiciary, multilateral and bilateral partners, representatives of all political parties, regional organizations and a wide range of civil society and private-sector organizations. In addition to Bujumbura, the mission visited Gitega, the second largest city in Burundi, and had the opportunity to engage with stakeholders dealing with gender, demobilization of former combatants and land issues.

4. The members of the mission wish to extend their appreciation to the Government of Burundi and the Integrated Office of the United Nations in Burundi for their hospitality and assistance during the visit.

II. General observations

5. Burundi's process of peacemaking and national reconstruction led to the end of the armed conflict and the establishment of democratically elected institutions in 2005. The delegation noted the progress made in Burundi in securing peace and laying the foundations for good governance and rule of law. With the support of multilateral and bilateral partners, Burundi has developed a number of strategies for peace and development, including the Peace Agreements (2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, 2003 global ceasefire agreement with CNDD-FDD and 2006 comprehensive ceasefire agreement with Palipehutu-FNL), the Programme of the Government of Burundi (2005-2010) and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (2007-2009). The Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region will also afford Burundi the opportunity to place its national peacebuilding efforts within a subregional perspective that involves 11 countries. There is a high expectation that these strategies and the Government's engagement with the international community should result in concrete "peace dividends", especially for the poorest and most vulnerable populations.

6. Many voices expressed the opinion that the improvement in the political and security spheres needs to be matched by social and economic progress. The country is facing a famine due to climatic changes, and a great proportion of the population remains extremely insecure because of poverty, the absence of employment opportunities and a lack of access to justice. The situation is reported to be particularly critical for Burundian women, who face additional marginalization and discrimination.

7. The delegation recognized that, in addressing its most recent political crisis, the Government of Burundi has relied on dialogue, constitutional procedures and the rule of law. The adherence to those values, which affirm participation, inclusion and consensus, is critical to continued progress towards sustainable peace in Burundi.

8. The Government of Burundi and most of the national stakeholders have high expectations for the outcome of a round table to be held in Bujumbura on 24 and 25 May 2007, and has appealed to all international partners to contribute to the

success of the event. A plan of action for the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy will be considered at the round table. A number of bilateral and multilateral partners have assisted the Government of Burundi in its peace consolidation and development efforts. However, the Government acknowledged the need to expand its donor base in order to face its many challenges. The Commission delegation was urged to assist in the mobilization of support for a successful round table. It was also noted that additional efforts are needed to enhance donor-Government coordination through the mapping of current projects and strengthening of the capacity of the Government, particularly its Comité national de coordination de l'aide.

9. The Commission delegation impressed upon the Government and all partners the need to resolve critical issues related to sustaining the fragile peace, notably the implementation of the 2006 ceasefire agreement with Palipehutu-FNL, the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms, including national human rights and truth and reconciliation commissions, and consolidating inclusive and participatory governance, as a means to reinforce the international community's confidence in Burundi.

10. The mission observed a generally good understanding among most partners in Burundi about the work of the Peacebuilding Commission as distinct from the Peacebuilding Fund. While the mission noted that allocations of the Fund are made towards projects that address critical areas for consolidating peace, it was noted that much focus remains on the short-term funding opportunities offered by the Fund, with limited consideration for medium-term or longer-term aspects of sustainable peacebuilding. The mission to Burundi contributed to clarifying the relationship between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, noting that the Commission has an essentially advisory role, and that while resource mobilization is part of its mandate, its medium-term and longer-term contributions go beyond fund-raising.

11. The regional dimensions of peace consolidation are critical and need to be fully reflected in the work of the Commission on Burundi. In that context, the Commission delegation met with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to discuss the need to build bridges between the two institutions and to create synergies between their respective efforts. The Commission delegation recommended that the Executive Secretary consider, within executive secretariat rules, requesting to participate in the meetings of the Burundi country-specific meetings in the future. The delegation took note of the steps taken by the Government of Burundi towards achieving full membership in the East African Community and of the revival of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries as additional positive developments at the regional level.

12. The delegation noted that noticeable efforts have been made to include civil society representatives, including private-sector organizations, religious communities and women's organizations, in the various national peace consolidation processes, but that further work needs to be done to ensure the full participation of civil society in the process.

13. In discussing Burundi's peacebuilding priority areas, the delegation noted the repeated appeals for additional resources for the implementation of critical interventions in priority areas across all sectors. The need to build national capacity in all sectors was also underlined in the majority of the mission's meetings.

14. Government, international partners, civil society and private-sector organizations noted that peacebuilding and development are intrinsically linked, and that it would be impossible to meaningfully engage the population, particularly vulnerable women and youth, in peacebuilding efforts in any of the priority areas if their basic social and economic rights are not fulfilled. A woman whom the Commission delegation met during the field visit to Gitega illustrated this by citing a Burundian proverb that if hunger spends the night in the belly, resentment awakes in the morning.

III. Key issues

Promotion of good governance

15. Democracy in Burundi should be consolidated through dialogue with, and inclusion of, all actors in Burundian society. Some voices noted that peace remains at risk as long as the Palipehutu-FNL is not fully integrated in peacebuilding processes. In fact, the implementation of the 2006 ceasefire agreement was singled out as a key step for the consolidation of peace. In that regard, renewed efforts, in particular those of the facilitator, should be deployed to ensure that the current obstacles to a constructive dialogue between the Government and Palipehutu-FNL are identified and resolved in an open and transparent manner, drawing not only on support from the international community but also on all actors of society (Parliament, Government, political parties, civil society, religious communities, media and private sector).

16. It is critical that achievements in women's participation and the integration of gender issues remain a priority in the implementation of peacebuilding efforts at all levels and in all sectors.

17. Peaceful and sustainable resolution of land issues, taking gender dimension duly into account, should continue to be promoted, in particular in relation to the return and reintegration of refugees and displaced populations.

Security sector reform

18. The reform of the army and security sectors should be pursued according to the provision of the relevant peace agreements and human rights and good governance principles.

19. The disarmament of civilian populations and the control and non-proliferation of small arms should be pursued, including in their subregional dimensions.

Transitional justice

20. The stakeholders met by the Commission delegation during its visit to Burundi unanimously pointed to impunity, failures in the justice system and ignorance of the country's history as being some of the root causes of the conflict in Burundi. It was therefore strongly recommended that transitional justice mechanisms, including a truth and reconciliation commission, be established expeditiously and in accordance with international standards.

21. The reform of the judiciary should be pursued to make it fair, equitable, efficient and accessible to all citizens.

Reconstruction and socio-economic community recovery

22. An unequivocal appeal to ensure that peacebuilding efforts address poverty and hunger and result in peace dividends for the most vulnerable and affected populations was made to the Commission delegation. This would include meeting the population's basic social and economic needs, including employment, especially for women, youth, demobilized combatants, returning refugees and displaced persons. Humanitarian interventions to mitigate the impact of the current climatic changes and famine should also be supported as part of the peacebuilding agenda. During the meetings with representatives of religious communities and women's groups, the concern over the increasing occurrence of gender-based violence was brought to the attention of the mission.

III. Recommendations and next steps for the Peacebuilding Commission

23. The Commission delegation and the Government of Burundi reached an understanding on the need to develop a strategic framework as the primary framework to guide the engagement of the Commission with the country. The need to establish a local consultative strategic and priority setting mechanism for peacebuilding was also called for.

24. A preliminary draft of the proposed Burundi strategic framework will be shared with members of the Commission and reviewed at an upcoming meeting of the Burundi configuration. This draft will build on the discussions held in the various meetings of the Commission in its Burundi country-specific format in 2006 and earlier in 2007, and reflect the outcome of initial discussions between the Government of Burundi and the United Nations on the ground. The draft will also take into account the discussions held during the visit of the Commission in Burundi, and integrate the perspectives of the main actors in peacebuilding in Burundi. The draft framework is scheduled to be reviewed at a meeting of the Joint Steering Committee on Peacebuilding, co-chaired by the Government of Burundi and the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, with the participation of bilateral/multilateral donors and representatives of civil society and private-sector organizations. Based on further consultations with all stakeholders in the weeks to come, the document will be revised and recirculated before it is tabled at the formal country-specific meeting to be held on 13 June 2007.

25. The upcoming meetings of the Commission on Burundi were also discussed, noting the intention to hold two more informal thematic meetings on community recovery and the rule of law/security sector reform during May 2007. Those meetings would provide a further opportunity to inform the Commission about the critical issues under those priority areas. The informal session on community recovery would be an opportunity to further sensitize the international community on the importance of addressing social and economic needs of populations at the community level as a key contribution to the consolidation of peace in Burundi. The event would also provide an opportunity to mobilize the international community's support for a successful outcome of the round table to be held in Bujumbura on 24 and 25 May 2007.

26. The Commission may wish to consider annual visits to countries under its consideration, possibly with a different delegation each time, as a way of monitoring and developing greater knowledge of the situation on the ground by the broader Commission membership.

Annex I

Terms of reference and composition of the Peacebuilding Commission delegation to Sierra Leone

1. At its fifth meeting, on 21 February 2007, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission decided that the Commission would make field visits to Sierra Leone and Burundi. The visit to Burundi was scheduled to be conducted from 9 to 15 April 2007.

Terms of reference

2. The Organizational Committee decided that the mission would have the following objectives:

(a) To obtain first-hand information about the situation on the ground and assess the challenges to peacebuilding;

(b) To discuss with the Government and other stakeholders the priority areas for peacebuilding, the development of an integrated framework for peacebuilding and how the Commission could best support national peacebuilding efforts;

(c) To focus the attention of the international community on peacebuilding efforts in Burundi, and to communicate the main principles and purposes of the Commission.

Composition

3. The Organizational Committee decided that the participants for the field visit would be chosen on a regional basis and would comprise one representative from each of the five regional groups, plus one representative from the non-Organizational Committee members of the country-specific meetings, plus the Chairs of the country-specific meetings. Members of the Commission represented in Burundi who express interest in associating themselves with the mission will join the delegation in its activities in Bujumbura. Staff from the Office will also be part of the delegation.

4. The Organizational Committee decided that the delegation to Burundi would include:

Johan L. Løvald (Norway) (*Head of mission*)

Francis K. Butagira (Uganda)

Maged A. Abdelaziz (Egypt)

Joseph Ntakirutimana (Burundi)

Raymond Wolfe (Jamaica)

Irena Zubčević (Croatia)

Asim I. Ahmad (Pakistan)

Joao Iambeni Gimolieca (Angola) (Minister Counsellor to the United Republic of Tanzania)

Rui Vasco (Angola) (Attaché to the United Republic of Tanzania)

François Cornet d'Elzius (Belgium) (Ambassador to Burundi)

Joël Jouvet (France) (Ambassador to Burundi)

Thomas Mangartz (Germany) (Ambassador to Burundi)

Devashish Chakravarti (India) (High Commissioner to the United Republic of Tanzania)

Mohamed El Khashab (Egypt) (Ambassador to Burundi)

Alain Darthenuc (European Commission) (Head of delegation in Burundi)

Sue Hogwood (United Kingdom) (Head of the Department for International Development Office in Burundi)

Pieter van Vliet (The Netherlands) (First Secretary, Embassy in Burundi)

Ann Breiter (United States of America) (Deputy Head, Embassy to Burundi)

Vibeke G. Soegaard (Norway) (Counsellor designate to Burundi)

Elisabeth Droyer (Norway)

Roxanna Carrillo (Peacebuilding Support Office)

Christine Muhigana (Peacebuilding Support Office)

Annex II

Programme of the mission to Burundi of the Peacebuilding Commission

Wednesday, 11 April 2007

1135	Arrival on flight KQ 474
1200-1230	Installation at the hotel and security briefing
1300-1445	Working lunch briefing of the Commission delegation by the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General
1520-1615	Meeting with Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation
1700-1800	Meeting with political parties represented in the National Assembly
1900-2100	Cocktail party hosted by the Government to welcome the Commission delegation

Thursday, 12 April 2007

0800-0850	Meeting with the judiciary (President of Supreme Court, President of Constitutional Court and Attorney General, President of the Court of Anti-Corruption)
0900-1000	Meeting with the Joint Steering Committee for Peace Consolidation
1015-1100	Meeting with President of Senate
1115-1200	Meeting with President of National Assembly
1215-1330	Meeting with Representatives of religious communities (Conférence épiscopale, conseil national des églises du Burundi, Communauté islamique du Burundi)
1500-1600	Meeting with civil society representatives
1600-1630	Meeting with Minister of Justice
1645-1800	Meeting with international partners
1815-1930	Meeting with First and Second Vice-Presidents of Burundi and the Interministerial Coordination Committee for Peace Consolidation
1945-2200	Dinner hosted by Chair of Commission delegation with regional ambassadors and Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

Friday, 13 April 2007

0800-0900	Meeting with President of Burundi
0930-1830	Field trip: Bujumbura to Gitega
	Objective: Broad consultations with different stakeholders at the local level and civil society representatives
	Theme: "Land, gender and dialogue"
1250-1345	Visit to demobilization centre
1400-1445	Meeting on gender issues with women's groups
1445-1535	Meeting on land issues with representatives of the national land commission
1545-1605	Lunch hosted by Government
1545-1830	Return to Bujumbura from Gitega
1845-1930	Meeting with private-sector representatives
1930-2030	Cocktail party hosted by Executive Representative of the Secretary-General
2100-2230	Dinner hosted by the Ambassador of Egypt to Burundi

Saturday, 14 April 2007

0830-0930	Briefing to the United Nations integrated management team by the Chairman of the Commission delegation
1100-1200	Press conference
1230	Departure to the Airport
1350	Take off on flight KQ 471